

Idaho Famous for its Trophy Trout Streams

Idaho is known worldwide for its outstanding trout fishing and abundant native trout waters.

Anglers flock to Idaho from throughout the world to pursue large rainbow trout on the Henry's Fork and big rainbows and browns on Silver Creek, a favorite haunt of Ernest Hemingway.

Near Boise, the South Fork of the Boise River produces many wild rainbow trout. The Big Wood River, near Ketchum-Sun Valley, also is a premium rainbow trout fishery. Special fishing regulations that allow young fish to grow into big fish ensure that these streams will continue to produce large, high-quality fish.

Many Idaho rivers contain robust populations of cutthroat trout, a native species and Idaho's official state fish. In fact, Idaho offers more native cutthroat trout fishing than any other state in the nation. Here, anglers have perhaps the finest opportunities to catch native trout in their ancestral waters. Outstanding westslope cutthroat trout fisheries include the St. Joe River near St. Maries, Kelly Creek in north central Idaho, and the Lochsa River along U.S. Highway 21, the historic route of Lewis and Clark.

In the South Fork of the Snake River, near Idaho Falls, anglers can catch large native Yellowstone cutthroat trout, and an occasional trophy brown trout, in a secluded incised canyon. Yellowstone cutthroat trout in the Blackfoot River regularly reach 20 inches or larger. In other waters, a 20-inch cutthroat is considered a *big* fish, although larger fish are occasionally taken.

Whitewater boaters can enjoy a two-pronged experience on the 50-mile Selway River and the 100-mile Middle Fork of the Salmon River in Central Idaho by fishing for native cutthroat while steering through many whitewater rapids. Fishing on the Selway and the Middle Fork is catch-and-release only, ensuring that the resource will endure for generations to come.

Native trout often eager to bite

Native trout truly are Idaho's living gems. Westslope cutthroat trout, Yellowstone cutthroat trout, Bonneville cutthroat trout, redband trout and mountain whitefish all provide excellent fishing opportunities, often in pristine surroundings, for both skilled and novice anglers alike. Bull trout may occasionally be caught by anglers, but they are currently protected under the Endangered Species Act, and special restrictions apply.

Cutthroat trout are easily identified by a bright reddish-orange slash on the lower jaw. They have a well-deserved reputation for being easily caught. To preserve the species, special regulations are in place on most Idaho cutthroat trout waters. These regulations not only ensure the long term future for cutthroat trout, but also provide for outstanding fishing.

During the heat of the summer, a range of dry flies, including attractor patterns and hoppers, work best to catch westslope cutthroat trout. Yellowstone cutthroat trout at times get very selective; matching the hatch is a key to success. Most of the time, attractor flies, flies that imitate small fish, spinning tackle ranging from small spinners to plugs, and a variety of baits can be effective for Yellowstone cutthroat trout. In streams, fish for them under brushy banks, and in pools, pocket-water and riffles.

Bonneville cutthroat trout are found only in the Bear River and Bear Lake watersheds in southeastern Idaho. The state record cutthroat trout, an 18-pound, 15-ounce fish, was taken from Bear Lake. Fish for Bonneville cutthroat in streams as you would for Yellowstones; in Bear Lake try trolling plugs or spoons.

Redband trout are Idaho's native rainbow trout. Anglers can find them in harsh desert conditions in the southwestern part of the state, where streams may be intermittent. Other redbands are found in Central Idaho and in the Kootenai River Basin in the Panhandle. In small streams, expect small fish, which will readily take a fly or lure. In the Kootenai River, native redbands can get very large, and heavier tackle is required.

Bull trout are found throughout central and northern Idaho, and in some parts of southwestern Idaho. Bull trout can grow very large - the current world record of 32 pounds was taken from Lake Pend Oreille in 1949. All bull trout caught must be released immediately. Check the latest issue of the IDFG Fishing Regulations brochure for current rules.

Beyond the streams named above, the persistent angler will find superb trout fishing in many lesser-known waters, including high-mountain lakes and tributary streams of Idaho's major rivers. This guide provides lots of ideas for places to visit to catch trout in every region of the state. After you get to know your way around the state, it may be worthwhile to comb over national forest maps to find the truly hidden gems.

Zebra mussels were probably introduced to the U.S. through discharge of freshwater ballast from ocean-going vessels, and were first discovered in Lake St. Clair, Michigan, in 1988. Within one year, they had colonized the surfaces of nearly every firm object in western Lake Erie. Major river systems that now have zebra mussels include the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Hudson, Illinois, Mississippi, Ohio, Arkansas, and Tennessee rivers.

Zebra mussels can colonize any firm surface that is not toxic, including rock metal wood vinyl, glass, rubber, fiberglass, paper, plants, other mussels — the surface need only be firm. Beds of mussels in some areas of Lake Erie now contain more than 30,000-and sometimes up to 70,000-mussels per square yard.

Zebra mussels like to attach themselves to water intake structures, such as those used for power and municipal water treatment plants and irrigation diversion structures. Since 1989, some plants located in areas of extensive zebra mussel colonization have reported significant reductions in pumping capabilities and occasional shutdowns.

There have been numerous reports of boat engines overheating due to colonies of zebra mussels clogging water inlets and mussels colonizing boat hulls.

Zebra mussels also affect beaches. The sharp-edged mussel shells along swimming beaches can be a hazard to unprotected feet.

Since discovery in 1987 in Idaho's Snake River, New Zealand Mud Snails have spread to surrounding areas where they have flourished. These small brown snails measure no more than 1/8 inch. An individual snail is no problem, but New Zealand Mud Snails easily reach densities that cause significant problems. Snail numbers as high as 750,000 per square yard have been recorded in some areas. At these levels the snails consume most available food leaving little for native snails and aquatic insects to

feed on. This leads to a reduction or elimination of the native creatures, which can result in a significant impact on fish and other members of the aquatic ecosystem. A single snail can establish a colony because individual snails have both male and female sex organs. A single snail produces up to 38 live snails twice a year. Each of these reaches reproductive age very quickly and it is possible that a single individual could be responsible for a population of 3,700,000 in two years.

Anglers easily overlook the small snails which can be found clinging to waders, boats, tackle and other fishing accessories. The snails have the ability to close off their shell opening allowing them to live for a long time without being in water. Anglers can unknowingly transfer the snails to new waters easily. Transport by anglers may be the most significant cause of the spread of mud snails.

We are asking every angler and water user to take a few simple precautions to help control the spread of these animals.

1. **Thoroughly clean and rinse your equipment before you leave a fishing site.**
2. **Completely dry all equipment before using again.**
3. **Please be sure to remove any visible vegetation from items that were in the water, including the boat, trailer, and all equipment.**
4. **Never release fish or any other living creature into any water it did not originate in.**
5. **Dry out your boat and other equipment for at least 48 hours before using in Idaho waters. Examine your boats exterior for mussels if it has been docked in infested waters. If mussels are found or the exterior is heavily fouled by algae, either clean fouled surfaces or leave the boat out of the water for at least five days before enjoying Idaho waters.**



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